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779 rather, they mostly represent alternatives and overlap for the same phenomena. And since each explanatory conception entails a different notion as to the controls or remedies applicable to the phenomenon in question, the multiplication of the former means also a multiplication of the latter. In other words, you have several strings to your bow. Indeed, this is doubly true. For as we know, the overlap in explanatory conceptions is matched by the overlap in the supernatural aids themselves; like the appeal to the *kuci*, which has 'no domain', ritual and even certain forms of medicine have a wide and multifarious efficacy. The lack of economy of thought thus means first, that the map of the universe is drawn in greater detail, and second, that in coping with its forces one has the chance of several trials.

779 Now, the 'details' in the universe are not multiplied at random. Rather are they ordered in the sense of two principles. The first 829 reflects the organization of human society as the Nupe see it. Thus there is the sphere of the fate of communities, governed by influences irreducible beyond the givenness of creation and anonymous beyond their ultimate origin in God, which influences are controllable by the collective efforts of *kuti*. Then there is the sphere of individual fate, governed by the specifically named agencies of life soul, shadow soul, witchcraft, and spirits (personal or otherwise), and controllable by *cigbe* and individual sacrifices. There is, further, the sphere of kinship fate, governed by the agency of *kuci* and controlled by sacrifices to ancestors and twins. And there is, finally, the sphere of the kingdom and political fate, with its special rituals of Tsoede. Admittedly, these various spheres are not as neatly separated, the social appropriateness of supernatural aids like the social import of supernatural influences overlapping at many points. Certain nature spirits also affect the fate of communities and hence call for the effort of ritual, while a drought, though it threatens the community, can also be dealt with by an invocation of *kuci*. Certain medicines are owned by kin groups, and certain *kuti* can be invoked by individuals; the twin sacrifices are addressed to God, like the *kuti*; witchcraft, though it attacks individuals, may be treated as a threat to the community or state; and the 'royal' cults of Tsoede also serve to meet the needs of individuals. If there were no such overlap, the chance of 'several trials' would not be as great as it is. But neither is it unlimited, being subject to that hierarchy of social appropriateness, which is only a little blurred by these ambiguities.

779 The second principle is purely theological and integrates the speculations about the 'details' of the universe with the basic dichotomy of God and the World; for this is carried even into the realm of things found in the world. Thus certain things come

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only among the Beni) the burial of lepers is the responsibility of the *gunnu* priests; and leprosy, as we know, is considered a 'disease of God', as the *gunnu* is a '*kuti* of God.' In their speculations about the meaning of the myth the Nupe indeed seize upon this last point. But they would only enlarge upon the terrifying aspects of leprosy and its divine preordainedness, being content to draw the parallel with a *kuti* equally powerful, dangerous, and divinely preordained. Their interest does not go further; none of my informants, for example, referred to the male-female principle believed to govern leprosy (and unrepresented in the ritual); nor did they attempt to relate the name *gunnu* to the name for leprosy, *Sokó 'gũ*, an etymological speculation which, from my knowledge of the Nupe ways of thinking, I should have expected. The Nupe, in brief, do not feel the need for any closely argued 'mythical charter' of their religious practices; and indeed, as I have stressed, the *gunnu* myth is altogether an exception.

A few informants offered me their theories about the derivation of the name *gunnu*. According to one the ritual was so called because of *egũ na dã minĩ 'nu õ na*, because of the 'red earth that is inside (the furrows) of hoeing'; according to another the reason was that, in the ritual, 'one reaches the end of the wandering, it is accomplished', *àgũ̀ 'nu mã, nwa dà zo*; in a third interpretation *gunnu* was taken to be the word *nugũ̀* ('boundary', 'limits'), reversed.[1] The first version would merely bring out the character of the *gunnu* as a farmer's ritual; the other two versions go more deeply, alluding to the characteristic concern of the ritual with the completion of a phase, and with 'end' and 'renewal'. Even so, the arguments are specious ones, ignoring, for example, the tone structure of Nupe language. Let us call them what they are, a play upon words and mere speculation.

To turn to the ceremonial itself. It lasts for three to five days, according to the amount of food and drink which the people are able to accumulate. The celebration I observed in Doko started on the 17th of February and lasted until the 19th.[2] Like the *žiba*, the *gunnu* has an esoteric part, performed outside the village, in the secrecy of the *gunnu 'bà* ('*gunnu* place'), and a public one, performed on the village dancing ground. The congregation of the esoteric rite includes both older men and youths, the youngest being about 15. The *gunnu* place looks much like the places of

[1] Such reversals of bisyllabic nouns occur quite often in Nupe language; they turn the noun into the corresponding verb, so that *nugũ̀*, 'limit', would become *gũ̀(e)-nu* 'reaching the limit', 'accomplish'.

[2] The date is not inflexible; in the same year the nearby village of Pichi celebrated the *gunnu* almost a month later, since the people had no 'leisure' before that, being kept busy by the collection of tax arrears.